



## WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON INVASIVE SPECIES

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **St. Catherine's High School Environmental Club Recognized as an Invader Crusader**

A successful invasive species eradication effort requires the hard work of an entire community. St. Catherine's High School Environmental Club has been willing to provide the hard manual labor it took to rid Racine's Colonial Park of invasive species. Under the direction of faculty advisor, Melissa Warner, the club has been working in the 68-acre "natural area" for the past six years to preserve the young mesic woodland in the park. In recognition, St. Catherine's High School Environmental Club has been selected to receive one of the inaugural Invader Crusader Awards presented by the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species.

The Invader Crusader Award was created to honor Wisconsin citizens and organizations for their significant contribution to the prevention or eradication of invasive species that harm Wisconsin's land and waters.

"It is important that we acknowledge the growing threat from invasive species to our natural resources and work to find solutions," said Governor Jim Doyle. Fortunately, invader crusaders, such as the St. Catherine's High School Environmental Club, and other award recipients are part of the solution. They are dedicated to protecting our environmental resources and raising awareness of this critical issue.

Since 1999, club members have pulled, dug, chopped, sawed and otherwise destroyed countless buckthorn trees, garlic mustard, and other invasive weeds infesting Colonial Park. Through their Herculean efforts, they have broke borrowed clippers, spades, and other tools. Replacement tools and equipment were provided by the Root-Pike Watershed Initiative Network to help the club continue their much-appreciated service.

All and all, it is estimated that the club contributed 1300 hours of hard manual labor in Colonial Park. The park's biological diversity is being preserved to

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the delight of nature lovers, bird watchers, and those enjoying a walk through the native woods. Racine City Forester Charles Klimech said about the club's effort, "This is important work that would not otherwise be done."

John Berge, Conservation Committee Chair for the Southeast Gateway Group of the Sierra Club, nominated St. Catherine's High School Environmental Club. Berge has worked on several projects with the students in Colonial Park.

"It is high time that these hardworking students receive well-deserved recognition," he said.

Although this was the first year of the award, the response was very positive.

"We received 31 nominations for 22 different people or groups," explained Becky Sapper with The Nature Conservancy and Invasive Species Council member. "There are so many that deserve recognition for their efforts to control invasive species in Wisconsin. We have high hopes that the number of nominations will continue to grow."

Other recipients of the 2005 Invader Crusader Award are:

Betty Czarapata (posthumous award), Muskego

Terri Lyon, Kiel

Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Odanah

Kelly Kearns, Department of Natural Resources, Madison

Kristin Westad, Military Ridge Prairie Heritage Area, Dodgeville

Invasive species cause harm to ecological resources, causing losses in agriculture, forestry and fisheries.

For more information on the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species or the Invader Crusader Award, call 715-682-5789.

*This news release is sponsored by the Wisconsin Council on Invasive Species. The Wisconsin State Legislature created the Council, to which Governor Doyle appointed 13 members. The Council's mission is to prevent and reduce the harmful impacts of invasive species on Wisconsin's environment and economy, as well as human well-being. Funding for this news release was provided by the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program and the Natural Resource Foundation's C.D. Besadny Conservation Grant Program.*